

Message Text

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TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 200528

NODIS

-STADIS, CHEROKEE////////////////

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 6266 SENT ACTION SECSTATE 23 AUG 77

QUOTE S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6266

NODIS/CHEROKEE

STADIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, IR, IS, US

SUBJECT: ISRAELI-IRANIAN ARMS CO-PRODUCTION

REF: A) TEL AVIV 6216, B) STATE 199042 (TOSEC 090007)

1. I MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE WEIZMAN AUGUST 22 TO
DISCUSS ISRAELI-IRANIAN COOPERATION AND CO-PRODUCTION
OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS. PRESENT AT MEETING WERE MOD DIRECTOR
GENERAL P. ZUSSMAN, WEIZMAN'S MILITARY SECRETARY AND THE
U.S. ARMY ATTACHE.

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2. WEIZMAN BEGIN WITH A REVIEW OF THE 20-YEAR ASSOCIATION
BETWEEN ISRAEL AND IRAN, INCLUDING THE EXCHANGES OF
MILITARY VISITS, THE OIL RELATIONSHIP AND SALES OF
AMMUNITION, ETC. HE STRESSED THAT CONTINUATION AND
STRENGTHENING OF THIS POLITICAL-MILITARY-COMMERCIAL
RELATIONSHIP IS VITAL FOR ISRAEL, AND HE BELIEVED
IMPORTANT FOR U.S. AS WELL. PROPOSED CO-PRODUCTION OF

WEAPONS SYSTEMS CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION WOULD BE KEY BUILDING BLOCK. SYSTEMS ARE NOT OF U.S. DESIGN, NOR DO THEY CONTAIN U.S. COMPONENTS. WEIZMAN SAID THAT THE SHAH, WHO IS INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN EXPANDED COOPERATION AND EVENTUAL CO-PRODUCTION, IS BECOMING "JUMPY" AND WANTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE U.S. ASSURANCES OF APPROVAL OF THIS ISRAELI-IRANIAN CONNECTION. WITHOUT SUCH ASSURANCES IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, WEIZMAN BELIEVES THAT SHAH WILL CANCEL THE DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAEL AND GO ELSEWHERE FOR THE WEAPONS CAPABILITIES, PROBABLY TO FRANCE, WHICH CAN EASILY HANDLE THIS PROBLEM.

3. THE MINISTER AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL BOTH EMPHASIZED THAT MORE IS AT STAKE FOR ISRAEL THAN JUST THE RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN. WEIZMAN STATED THAT "THE FUTURE OF THE ISRAELI AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY" DEPENDS ON EXPANSION OF THE TYPES OF SYSTEMS INVOLVED. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON HE WAS URGING FAVORABLE U.S. CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSAL WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS CURRENTLY BEING IN THE PLANNING AND DISCUSSION PHASE WITH IRAN.

4. FOUR SYSTEMS AND ONE "PROJECT" ARE INCLUDED. ISRAEL WOULD PROVIDE THE TECHNOLOGICAL BASE AS WELL AS THE INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION CAPABILITY WHILE IRAN DEVELOPS A CO-PRODUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE DURING THE INITIAL FEW YEARS. THE SYSTEMS, ALL DESCRIBED AS "CONVENTIONAL"

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ARE:

A. AN ARTILLERY ROCKET WITH A RANGE OF FROM 30 TO 70 KM. DEPENDING UPON THE WEIGHT OF THE WARHEAD PAYLOAD (UP TO 350 KILO). THIS ROCKET IS CURRENTLY BEING INTRODUCED INTO THE IDF INVENTORY.

B. A 500 KM. (ALTERNATIVELY DESCRIBED AS A 300-MILE) GUIDED MISSILE, SURFACE-TO-SURFACE (SS), NICKNAMED THE "JERICHO". BOTH THE MINISTER AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL STATED THAT NO U.S. TECHNOLOGY OR COMPONENTS ARE INCLUDED IN THIS SYSTEM. THE DIRECTOR GENERAL LATER QUALIFIED THIS BY STATING THAT PERHAPS SOME U.S. STANDARD TRANSISTORS MIGHT BE INCLUDED, BUT THAT THE SAME ITEMS COULD BE PURCHASED OFF THE EUROPEAN SHELF. IT IS BASICALLY A FRENCH-DESIGNED MISSILE, INITIALLY DEVELOPED IN FRANCE AND THEN COMPLETED IN ISRAEL. THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM (DESCRIBED BY WEIZMAN AS "NOT AS GOOD AS IT MIGHT BE") IS ENTIRELY OF FRENCH DESIGN. THIRTEEN METERS IN LENGTH, IT IS A SOLID PROPELLANT TWO-STAGE MISSILE WITH A 750 TO 850 KILO WARHEAD. THE CURRENT WARHEAD IS A SINGLE EXPLOSIVE WITH A CBU DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM UNDERWAY. THE MISSILE HAS BEEN TESTED LAUNCHED, BUT IS NOT YET FULLY OPERATIONAL IN THE IDF. WEIZMAN SAID THAT SHAH IS

DETERMINED TO OBTAIN THE SYSTEM TO COUNTER THE IRAQI SCUD-B (250 KM.) THREAT, AND ALSO FOR REASONS OF "NATIONAL PRIDE." (WHEN ASKED WHY ISRAEL NEEDED THE JERICHO, WEIZMAN POINTED ON THE MAP TO CAIRO.) THE COST PER MISSILE IS ESTIMATED AS TWO MILLION DOLLARS EACH. ZUSSMAN SAID THAT SOME OF THE MACHINERY USED IN THE ISRAELI PRODUCTION IS OF U.S. MANUFACTURE, BUT THAT THE SAME EQUIPMENT COULD BE ACQUIRED ELSEWHERE IF NECESSARY. DELIVERY OF ISRAELI-PRODUCED JERICHOES TO IRAN COULD BEGIN APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS AFTER AN AGREEMENT WAS REACHED.

C. A 102-150 KM. SS MISSILE, DESCRIBED AS "THE POOR MAN'S LANCE." THIS MISSILE, NOW ONLY IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING STAGE, WOULD BE A ONE-STAGE SCALED-DOWN JERICHO.

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INITIAL DELIVERY TO IRAN COULD BEGIN IN ABOUT FOUR YEARS. D. A SEA-LAUNCHED SURFACE-TO-SURFACE MISSILE DESCRIBED AS "POST-GABRIEL." ALSO IN THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE, IT WOULD HAVE A RANGE IN EXCESS OF THE U.S. HARPOON (90KM.) E. THE ONE "PROJECT" IS THE PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF CO-PRODUCTION FACILITIES BY ISRAEL IN IRAN. IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT IT WOULD TAKE APPROXIMATELY FIVE YEARS TO CONSTRUCT AN INFRASTRUCTURE IN IRAN CAPABLE OF FULL-SCALE CO-PRODUCTION OF THE JERICHO AND THE OTHER SYSTEMS DESCRIBED.

5. WEIZMAN ALSO DESCRIBED HIS "CRAZY IDEA" OF EVENTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF A FOLLOW-ON FIGHTER SUBSTITUTE FOR THE F16 WHICH HE BELIEVES WOULD BE OF INTEREST TO IRAN, BUT WHICH IS NOT CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION (SEE SEPTTEL).

6. AFTER DESCRIBING THE SPECIFIC SYSTEMS INVOLVED, WEIZMAN MADE A STRONG PLEA FOR FAVORABLE U.S. CONSIDERATION OF THE ISRAELI-IRANIAN CONNECTION, AND SPECIFICALLY ASKED THAT SHAH BE INFORMED QUICKLY THAT U.S. IS CONSIDERING A FAVORABLE RESPONSE, SINCE HE BELIEVES THE IRANIANS ARE CURRENTLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A POSITIVE U.S. REPLY. HE ALSO UNDERScoreD SEVERAL TIMES THAT BOTH ISRAEL AND IRAN ARE VERY CONCERNED THAT NOTHING LEAK CONCERNING THESE DISCUSSIONS OR OF THE RELATIONSHIP. HE BELIEVES THAT SUCH A LEAK WOULD IMMEDIATELY CAUSE THE SHAH TO DROP THE PROJECT. PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AFTER THE PROJECTS WERE WELL UNDERWAY WOULD NOT BE AS HARMFUL AS PREMATURE DISCLOSURE NOW.

7. BOTH WEIZMAN AND ZUSSMAN SAID THEY BELIEVE A U.S. OBJECTION TO ANY ONE SYSTEM, SPECIFICALLY THE JERICHO, COULD CAUSE THE SHAH TO DROP THE ENTIRE SCHEME.

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8. IN CLOSING, WEIZMAN RESTATED HIS CONVICTION THAT U.S. CONCURRENCE IN THE TOTAL PACKAGE WOULD BE IN U.S. INTERESTS, AS IT WOULD SERVE TO STRENGTHEN THE POLITICAL LINKS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND IRAN, WOULD ASSIST IN THE SUPPORT OF AN AILING ISRAELI MILITARY INDUSTRY, AND WOULD PROVIDE IMPETUS TO THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF IRAN. ADDITIONALLY, HE IS CONVINCED IF ISRAEL CANNOT PRODUCE THE SYSTEMS, FRANCE IS READY TO DO SO.

9. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT ISRAEL PERCEIVES THIS RELATIONSHIP AND SPECIFICALLY THIS PROPOSAL AS CRITICAL FROM BOTH A POLITICAL AND AN INDUSTRIAL BASE SUPPORT VIEW. IT IS ALSO OBVIOUS THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE NOT CERTAIN THAT THE SHAH WILL SIGN, EVEN WITH U.S. APPROVAL. THEY ARE POSITIVE HE WILL BACK AWAY WITHOUT OUR "NO OBJECTION" AND GO ELSEWHERE. IF THE DEALS GO THROUGH, WE HAVE TO ASSUME THAT THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK, INCLUDING THE FACT OF U.S. CONCURRENCE, MAY EVENTUALLY LEAK.

10. I HOPE WE CAN TELL THE SHAH THAT WE DO NOT OBJECT TO ANY ELEMENTS OF THE PACKAGE, SO LONG AS NO U.S. COMPONENTS ARE INVOLVED. MY GUESS IS THAT THE ISRAELIES ARE RIGHT ABOUT THE FRENCH OPTION, AND ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE FOR THE SHAH OF HAVING THE JERICHO INCLUDED IN THE PACKAGE. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS IS A CASE IN WHICH THE BALANCE OF OUR INTERESTS TIPS TOWARD SUPPORTING EVEN THE MISSILE PROPOSAL IN VIEW OF THE IRAQI SCUD CAPABILITY. AND TO TORPEDO THIS DEAL WOULD CERTAINLY PRODUCE VERY GREAT RESENTMENT HERE, OF THAT THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION. ADDED TO THE KFIR/ECUADOR AND F-16 CASES, REFUSAG WOULD SET THE POT TO A ROLLING BOIL.

11. DEPARTMENT PLEASE REPEAT TO USDEL SECRETARY AND TO TEHRAN FOR AMBASSADOR SULLIVAN.

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LEWIS

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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